



A National Park Service Is Born 1916

The summer of 1916 was one of the hottest on record in Washington. It seemed to drag on endlessly. Our office still had no permanent personnel. Grace put in more and more hours on my work, as I had less and less time to do it myself. We worked together, often during regular hours, usually on Sundays too. She did routine clerical work and the never-ending scrapbook pasting while I typed reports, kept Mather up to date on Washington affairs, and devoted myself to the park service bill.

Unfortunately, I also had to wrangle with problems in various national parks because Marshall was not holding up his end and was proving to be a poor administrator. Once more my savior was W. B. Acker. Although badly overworked himself, he was always ready to help.

Getting the national park bill through Congress was a thankless job, for 1916 was an election year. More importantly, it was a presidential election year. To the incumbents, getting reelected was the only thing that counted, so they were frequently back home campaigning. This was the problem when trying to get the House and Senate bills reconciled for a final version. To round up all six conference members at one time to discuss compromise was close to impossible. This one was away in California this week while another was back home the next.

Before and during the hearings and on into summer, the friends and adherents of Stephen Mather and national parks let loose a torrent of publicity for the parks and for the bill. George Horace Lorimer and his

Saturday Evening Post, featuring Herbert Quick, Emerson Hough, and other writers, kept up a running commentary. Railroads issued their summer timetables and brochures filled with national park propaganda. Automobile and highway associations, chambers of commerce, and newspapers (especially those near a park area) kept up the good word. Bob Yard diligently pumped out information to all these organizations as well as working on his own *Parks Portfolio II*.

Probably the single most important publication to influence the members of Congress was the April 1916 issue of *National Geographic*. Gilbert "Tenderfoot" Grosvenor had come through for Stephen Mather and the ideas he expressed around the Sierra campfires. This issue of the magazine was titled "The Land of the Best—Tribute to the Scenic Grandeur and Unsurpassed Natural Resources of Our Own Country." There were even some pages in full color and a foldout panorama of the General Sherman Tree at Sequoia. The entire issue focused on the wonders of America, with a heavy emphasis on national parks. Grosvenor left nothing to chance. In case some dull-witted congressman failed to see the magazine, he had a copy delivered by messenger to each one of them.

During this summer of controversy, Mather remained in the West. After being assured that Vogelsang was out of danger, he had gone on to San Francisco. The Desmond Yosemite Company was a constant worry. Desmond was not a diplomatic person, not a manager of any kind. He had constant trouble with workmen, with the financial men overseeing the company, and with the ordinary tourist. The accommodations and food produced a chorus of complaints. The company was losing money as fast as the Curry Company was making it.

More trouble for Mather arose when serious complaints about Robert Marshall began to arrive on Secretary Lane's desk. Although Marshall was a brilliant geographer and engineer and knew the parks better than anyone, he was also tactless, stubborn, and quick to argue. He alienated half the people he met. He seemed to have little knowledge of expenses, with frequent overruns on estimates, especially for the Yosemite power plant.

Lane talked the problem over with me and suggested that while out on the coast with Marshall Mather should just fire him. Knowing how tired and stressed-out Mather was, I politely disagreed with Lane. I said I'd write Mather, say nothing about the complaints Lane had received, and suggest that he have Marshall travel with him for a while. Mather was a

superb judge of people. He would catch onto the situation fast enough and decide what to do. Under my breath I muttered, "Please, God, keep Bob at least until we get that park bill passed."

As it turned out, Mather was so happy and so eager to escape to the Sierra Nevada with his second mountain party that he never bothered to reply about Marshall. He temporarily ignored the problem and even asked Bob again to organize a Sierra mountain trip for him. But he didn't invite him to go along.

The second Mather Mountain Party was as memorable as the first. Mather's original list of companions was almost twice the size of the 1915 list, but only seven men ended up accompanying him: Harold F. White and F. W. Grimwood, friends from Chicago, Bob Yard, famous photographer Edward S. Curtis, George Davis of the Geological Survey, and E. O. McCormick and Wilbur McClure, who had been on the earlier trip. Ty Sing was there again to cater the meals. The group traveled along the new John Muir Trail from Yosemite through Evolution Basin and the middle and south forks of the Kings River to Sequoia National Park. Mather was on top of the world, ecstatic, with all his cares temporarily banished.

Meanwhile, our park bill awaited a House-Senate conference to agree on the final version. On the face of it, that sounds simple. However, President Wilson's popularity had dropped severely by 1916. Democrats were frightened not only of losing the White House but, worse, of losing their own congressional seats. Republicans thought they smelled victory and eagerly looked forward to Charles Evans Hughes as president and to a powerful Republican Congress. So rules were set up that skipped the normal adjournment of the Congress and substituted recesses. They would meet one day and then recess for up to three days or more.

I almost ripped my hair out when I realized how much harder it would be to corral the conferees, as now more than ever they would be home campaigning. It was a losing battle. I'd get two or three together, but some pivotal person would be campaigning. I'd get a different group, only to get some written instructions from a representative or senator telling me he would never accept this or that.

Time was getting shorter and shorter before the elections. I was getting more and more worried that if this bill couldn't be passed in this Congress, we'd have to start all over. What if the administration changed from Democratic to Republican? What about a new batch of congressmen, a new president, a new secretary of the interior? All would have to be courted and placated. It was too gruesome to dwell on. A decision for action had to be made now.

I talked to the heads of the Public Lands committees, Representative Scott Ferris and Senator Henry Myers, the chief conferees. The latter I caught at Union Station as he was about to leave for New York. I pleaded for help to arrange a meeting to work out a compromise on the bills. Both congressmen felt it was impossible to get the whole committee together. Fortunately, however, the two men were close friends, saw my point, and, as they were now real park boosters, suggested that just the three of us make a settlement and then present it to the other conferees.

That sounds simple, but it was not. One fiery hot day Ferris arranged a meeting in his office in the Capitol. Just Myers, Ferris, and I were present. Even with four electric fans blowing on us, it was like a Turkish bath. We hammered out a general agreement between the House and Senate bills. Whether it was the heat or the long day, we decided we'd had enough and would set up another meeting to finalize it word by word.

Three or four days later, Billy Kent called to tell me to be at his home on F Street to finish the compromise bill. The three of us from the first meeting were there, but this time we were joined by McFarland and Watrous from the American Civic Association, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Raker, and Kent.

I remember that at one point Olmsted wanted to change a few words in the famous paragraph he had written for an earlier park bill, the one example of lofty English in our organic act: "The fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations... is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Poor man. Everyone jumped on him at once. McFarland said: "Don't you dare change a thing, Olmsted. Your one paragraph sells the whole bill."

The important differences had been the Senate's elimination of the grazing allowance and the dispute over monetary allocations for the Washington office. Myers allowed the grazing (except in Yellowstone), and a compromise amount was fixed for our Interior Department office. It took several more sessions with several other people to write the final compromise bill, but these dealt mainly with unimportant words and phrases.

But that wasn't the end of it. Now Ferris and Myers said that it was up to me to get the other conferees to agree. It wasn't just getting them to agree. It was trying to find and catch them. And that's what I did for

several weeks. Up and down to Capitol Hill on the streetcar, find a representative at his home, find a senator at his club. If any one of them wanted to change even a word, I had to go back to all the rest for approval.

I never knew I could be so persuasive, pragmatic, and controlled in temper. Grace used to laugh so hard at home at night when I'd blow off steam, call some of our noble legislators every name I could use in front of a lady, and then sit down and fuss over my little black notebook. It listed each conferee on a separate page with information on where he spent his leisure time, what hours he could be found at the Capitol, and when he was away.

On August 15 the Senate accepted the compromise bill and passed it with flying colors. A few days later it came before the House of Representatives, and trouble loomed. Ferris called to tell me that Irvine Lenroot had assured him he wouldn't get in our way, but that his Wisconsin colleague, our old enemy William Henry Stafford, was still there with all his hatred of any new bureaucracy and would fight us.

Ferris made a suggestion. He said that Stafford was a golf nut and played every chance he got. We could include him in an interesting foursome and have him safely out on the course at the time the vote was taken on the bill. It was a great idea, but before we did anything about it Ferris called back to say he had more than enough votes for us. Forget Stafford. On August 22 the House also passed the bill. Senator Smoot called and gave me the good news.

All that was needed now was to get the bill engrossed, printed, and signed by President Wilson. It was early afternoon. Grace had come to work with me in the morning, for she flatly refused to stay in our apartment to suffer another blistering day. She had actually slept on the fire escape a few nights. We were trying to play catchup with the accumulated paperwork and newspaper clippings.

We were wildly excited about the passage of the bill. We hugged each other and danced up and down the office. A couple of people ran in to see what all the commotion was about and then joined in the celebration.

Suddenly I had an idea. I told Grace to stay at Interior under the electric fan while I went up to the Capitol. Here I found the enrolling clerk and inquired when the bill would *be* sent to the president for his signature. He didn't know. Just then the telephone on his desk rang. I didn't mean to eavesdrop, but my antenna must have been up because I heard him repeat: "Yes, sir. The president wants the army appropriation bill right away for his signature. I'll get it ready and send it down immediately."

I pounced on the words "president" and "sign." Quickly I asked if the clerk would please put the national park bill in the same envelope, so Wilson would sign it too. He shrugged his shoulders, found our bill, inserted it with the army bill, and gave it to a clerk to take to the White House.

I don't know what transportation the clerk used, but I raced out of the Capitol and jumped on the first streetcar heading west. I had to get off at the Willard Hotel, so I ran the rest of the way to the White House, arriving with no breath and my shirt wet through.

The Capitol messenger hadn't arrived yet. I had met Maurice Latta, the White House legislative clerk, several times at the Cosmos Club. I used all the persuasiveness and smooth talk I had to convince him that he should be sure President Wilson signed the park bill when he signed the army bill. I went further and requested that he save the pen used to sign the bill, explaining about Mather being away in California and wanting to give him that as a gift. Latta knew and liked Mather and agreed.

Just as I was leaving, I also asked if he would please call me when Wilson had actually signed our organic act creating the National Park Service. He said he would, and I gave him our phone number. Well, it wasn't ours. We couldn't afford one. A public phone was in the hall inside the front door of our apartment building.

Now I rushed back to the Interior Department, told Secretary Lane what I had done, and suggested that he call Latta and repeat my requests. He kindly followed up on that and was assured by Latta that he'd personally take care of everything. As I was leaving, Lane put his arm around my shoulders and said: "This a real milestone for the department. I'm proud of you boys. I knew you and Steve would do it." Well, it certainly was one of the greatest moments in my life.

It was dinner time when I sagged into a chair in my office, too exhilarated and exhausted to move. Grace was still excited, hugged me, and said: "Come on. Let's go to the Willard or some other really expensive place, have dinner, and celebrate." She rarely asked for anything special, so I usually did what she wanted, but I was wrung out. "How about a nice quiet meal at the Occidental instead?" I asked. And, of course, she readily agreed. That's what we did: ate a rather quick meal and walked home.

Before we went upstairs, I called the White House, but there was no word on the signing. We climbed the four flights of stairs to our devilishly hot apartment. Grace got the couch cushions and adjourned to the fire escape, while I lay on the floor nearby, clad only in underwear.

It wasn't very long before I heard, "Mr. Albright. Telephone." Grabbing my pants, I hobbled into them and ran down the four flights. It was Ray Gidney, calling to see if we would come to Jean's birthday party. Up the four flights again. This was repeated twice. How all these people suddenly had to call on the same evening—the wrong evening—I'll never know. But the fourth time was the charm. It was Maurice Latta. President Wilson had signed our bill about 9:00 P.M. Joseph Tumulty, Wilson's secretary, had the pen and would keep it for Mather. August 25, 1916, had been quite an incredible day.

The following morning I sent this telegram to Mather at the Palace Hotel in Visalia, California: "Park Service bill signed nine o'clock last night. Have pen President used in signing for you. Appear before members Senate Subcommittee on deficiency bill today. Also Chairman Fitzgerald of House Subcommittee. Wire instructions regarding matters you wish me handle before leaving. Horace."

The deficiency bill was a reminder to Mather about our precarious fiscal situation. With fear and trepidation, I appeared before the House and Senate committees to ask for additional appropriations. My point was that the Congress created the National Park Service but gave us no money to operate our Washington office. I was up at the Capitol, hat in hand, begging for some appropriations to see us through until money could be allocated in the spring for the full fiscal year of 1918.

The Senate committee was inquiring, polite, didn't ask for too many details, and seemed to pass on it. But now I was staring at House Committee Chairman John J. Fitzgerald. It was like facing a firing squad. He asked more impossible questions and probed into more matters than his committee was supposed to cover.

My worst concern was the need for more money for the power plant in Yosemite. Congress had looked over the design and costs proposed by Henry Floy, Mather's brother-in-law, and on the basis of these had appropriated \$150,000 to build an entirely new plant. One of Marshall's main tasks in the summer had been to oversee this construction. Well, it had a long way to go for completion when the money ran out. Mather blamed Marshall. Marshall said the plans were too elaborate for the money allocated. I didn't know the ins and outs of the situation, but only that I had to try to get more money to complete the project.

Finishing the hearing, Fitzgerald glared at me and roared: "Albright, that power plant can stay rusting in that valley until Gabriel blows his horn, an everlasting monument to bureaucratic waste." I left town the

next day without knowing what this fearful ogre would do and, frankly, not caring except to wish him a quick and horrible death. As I wrote William Colby, "I took a terrific punishment at the hands of Chairman Fitzgerald."

To get out of Washington was a real relief. Mather had instructed me to meet him in Glacier National Park and bring my "bride" for a real honeymoon. Not only had he been grateful for all that I had accomplished during that endless summer, but his conscience had also begun to bother to him. He confessed to me that he had been thoughtless about our original honeymoon and suggested that I take Grace out to Glacier National Park for a real honeymoon. Marshall wrote out my travel orders and assigned some work for me to take care of in Glacier. Mather would pay for everything over my four-dollar government per diem.

But now Mather tacked on a new twist. After returning from his Sierra mountain trip, he intended to go with E. O. McCormick to Yosemite. Then they would travel in Sunset, McCormick's private railroad car, to check on the roads and prospective railroad to Crater Lake and hotel construction at Paradise Valley in Mount Rainier. Afterward Mather would proceed alone and join us in Glacier.

Three on a honeymoon! Well, anything looked good if we could escape Washington, and as long as I was with Grace I could put up with Mather, too.

The "Glacier Mountain Party," like Mather's Sierra mountain parties, was created to indoctrinate the group with the fundamental ideas of the newly formed Park Service and enlist their help, financially and otherwise. Mather insisted that Grace go along. My bride, who had never been on a horse, must now join twelve men to cross the mountains from Lake McDonald to the eastern side of the park.

On September 6 our pack train set off for East Glacier, following almost the same route Mather and I had taken in 1915: Sperry Chalets, then across Gunsight Pass to Going-to-the-Sun Chalets on Lake St. Mary. The next day the weather turned vicious, so Supervisor Ralston advised going by launch to St. Mary Chalets and driving by car to Many Glacier. But Mather laughed and shouted: "On your horses! We need a little adventure!" Obediently we climbed into our saddles and started for Many Glacier Hotel, twenty-six miles away over some of the most rugged terrain in the park. The weather was merciless, a mixture of sleet, hail, and snow, hard-driven by a brutal wind. Eventually we reached Many Glacier Hotel and spent several days inspecting this region. Mather's plans called for us to continue by horseback to Glacier Park Hotel, but when Roe Emery offered comfortable cars instead, most jumped at the chance—including Stephen Mather.

A few days later Mather left for Washington while Grace and I went on to Yellowstone. Arriving on September 13, we stayed at the home of the superintendent, Colonel Lloyd Brett. After a few days of sightseeing, Grace's first, I had to get down to business with Colonel Brett.

During the trip to California in March 1915, Mather and I had made a verbal agreement with General Hugh Scott, chief of staff of the army, for the withdrawal of the troops charged with protecting Yellowstone. During the winter of 1915-16, Mather and Scott had several meetings to solidify arrangements. The transfer from military to civilian control was to become effective on October 1, 1916.

Brett and I had a myriad of details to work out: the transfer of Fort Yellowstone and the army stations in other parts of the park, horses, huge amounts of equipment, the discharge of certain soldiers who would become National Park Service rangers and maintenance personnel, the consolidation or elimination of concessioners and new agreements with the remaining ones. So Saturday the sixteenth saw the two of us off on inspection tours around the park.

When we returned to Mammoth, Brett assembled the men who would soon be discharged from the army to become rangers in the National Park Service. Some were scouts, others regular army troopers. Brett had gone over the men very carefully, turning down those he did not consider fit timber for the new force. However, he didn't hesitate to let his own finest, most exceptional men leave his command to join us.

I spent a good deal of time talking to each man individually. They were quite a group, tough as nails, but experienced, honest, and excited about their future work. I was very impressed. I always felt they set the standard for our future corps of rangers.

Sunday was a quiet day for the ladies while I put in most of my time working at the colonel's office with Chester Lindsley. He was Brett's right-hand man, a civilian who was designated to become supervisor of Yellowstone when the army relinquished control to the Park Service on October 1, 1916. He was a very capable, knowledgeable fellow, and I had every confidence that he would carry out the instructions I was leaving with him and would manage the park efficiently.

At this time it seemed that Lindsley would be totally responsible for the Park Service takeover, to see that scouts were transformed into rangers, that army property was completely accounted for and turned over in good shape, and that approved construction would be carried out. However, Mather persuaded General Scott to allow Colonel Brett to

remain to aid Lindsley until all the troops left Yellowstone. This turned out to be near the end of October.

But right now I also needed Lindsley's advice about the concessions, for I was apprehensive about Mather's plans. They were perhaps too radical and too fast to initiate at the same time the revolutionary change in management of the park was taking place. It turned out this meeting of ours was most valuable, giving me a new slant on some of Yellowstone's problems.

Ten of us enjoyed another festive dinner at the Bretts. The army men got off on various entertaining tales of their adventures. Lloyd Brett was a great raconteur. He gave us a wonderful picture of the Indian wars in which he was engaged after he graduated from West Point in 1879. We later learned that he had received the Congressional Medal of Honor for bravery in a battle with the Sioux.

On Monday, September 18, the Albrights were driven to Gardiner and entrained for the East. We arrived in Washington on September 21 at 4:40 P.M., dumped our baggage at home, ate dinner downtown, and with a sigh of relief sank into our own bed at last. It had been an exciting and fascinating learning experience, but when would the Albrights get a real honeymoon? (In Hawaii in 1920. But that is another story.)

Mather returned to Washington in early October to meet with General Hugh Scott. In Scott's office the three of us checked out all the details of the National Park Service assuming control of Yellowstone. I was asked to fill them in on my trip to Yellowstone and observations there.

Scott suddenly changed the subject. "Mr. Albright, I'm curious about how you fared with your testimony before John Fitzgerald." That startled me, but I gave a full and truthful account of Fitzgerald's tirade about the Yellowstone changeover and his warning that he hadn't given up. He swore he'd have the army back in the park some day.

The attention focused on Yellowstone did accomplish some important things. The concession problem was basically solved. All the credit goes to Mather. While we were in the park in the summer, he made a decision on the boat franchise and cleaned up part of the accommodation tangle. Ever since Ford Harvey had introduced him to the idea of extended monopoly, Mather had been solidifying his future strategy. He would try out his ideas in Yellowstone. If they worked, he would extend them to all the other parks.

Mather called a conference of Yellowstone concessioners in Washington on December 10, 1916. There was not much give and take with the

issue. Mather simply dictated that Harry Child got all the hotels in the park under the Yellowstone Park Hotel Company. His Yellowstone Transportation Company consolidated all the transportation lines. This was because the hotels were a losing business and transportation a money-maker and also because Child was heavily backed by the powerful Northern Pacific Railroad. As part of the deal, Child was ordered to get rid of all horses, stagecoaches, and other equipment and have his operation completely motorized by 1917. This is where the railroad company came in. It helped out financially when Child disposed of stage-line equipment and bought 116 new White buses for more than four hundred thousand dollars.

Frank J. Haynes had owned one of the transportation companies Child acquired. He was paid off by Child and then given the monopoly for photographic stores. The camping companies were also consolidated and eventually ended up with Child too. Someone said, "Harry owned everything in Yellowstone except the rattlesnakes."